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Amendment Under 37 C.F.R. § 1.116
U.S. Serial No. 09/898,185
Group Art Unit: 2674
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REMARKS

Claims 1-4 and 6-30 are pending in the present application.
Claims 1, 7, 8, 9, 12 and 21 have been amended herein.

I. FORMAL MATTERS

Applicant notes with appreciation that the Examiner has found claims 3, 5, 7-9, 13-17 and 22-26 to be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Applicant has amended herein independent claims 1, 12 and 21 herein to include the allowable subject matter of claim 5. Therefore, Applicant submits that the remaining claims also are allowable.

Applicant notes with appreciation that the Examiner indicates that the drawings filed on July 3, 2001 are acceptable.

Applicant notes with appreciation the Examiner's acknowledgement of the claim to priority and indication that the certified copies of the priority documents have been received.

Applicant notes with appreciation the Examiner's inclusion in the Office Action of a copy of the PTO Form SB/08 that was submitted in the Information Disclosure Statement filed on August 31, 2005. Each reference is initialed by the Examiner, thereby indicating that each reference was considered by the Examiner and will be listed on the face of any patent that issues from the present application.

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II. PRIOR ART REJECTIONS

Claims 1, 6, 11, 12, 19, 21 and 28 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) over U.S. Patent No. 5,579,027 (Sakurai).

Claims 2, 4, 10, 18, 20, 27, 29 and 30 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Sakurai in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,798,740 (Bitzakidis).

As presented above, Applicant has amended independent claims 1, 12 and 21 herein to include the allowable subject matter of claim 5. Therefore, Applicant submits that all of the remaining claims also are allowable.

Based on the foregoing, Applicant submits that the present application is in condition for allowance and allowance is respectfully solicited. If the Examiner believes that the prosecution of this case could be expedited through a telephone interview, he is kindly invited to contact the undersigned at the phone number listed below.

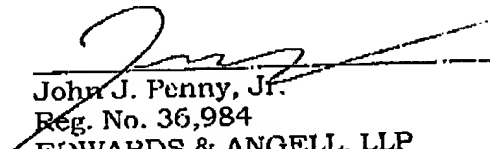
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Applicant believes that no additional fees are due for the subject application. However, if for any reason a fee is required, a fee paid is inadequate or credit is owed for any excess fee paid, you are hereby authorized and requested to charge Deposit Account No. 04-1105.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: September 18, 2006
Customer No.: 21874


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